

OSU

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and Avezzano says, "We should be very competitive at that position."

Up front, center Roger Levasa (6-2, 255) is the heart and soul of the Beaver offensive line. A senior, Levasa hasn't missed a game since coming to OSU. Despite the team's winless record, he was an honorable mention all-America choice last year and is considered by Avezzano to be "the best center in the Pac-10."

The OSU line lost three starters to graduation and Avezzano feels a major overhaul may be in order before opening day. "I don't have a real solid feeling for the rest of the positions," he says. "A lot still has to be done."

One prime candidate will doubtless be senior tackle Eric Pettigrew (6-5, 259), a three-year letterman. Other lettermen on hand are tackle Joe Carnahan (6-5, 237) and guards Pete Grossnicklaus (6-5, 233), Jim Wilson (6-3, 231), and Mike McKelvey (6-2, 239).

If the picture on offense isn't rosy, the defensive outlook is positively thorny.

Opponents had no trouble moving the ball on OSU last season. The Beavers' 11 foes scored a total of 51 touchdowns — averaging nearly five per game — and averaged a six-yard gain every time they snapped the ball.

"Our defense must get a lot better," Avezzano says flatly. "We have a little bit more depth than we had last year, but we're going to have to wait and see."

The secondary is where the major changes have been made. Except for junior cornerback Forrest Pllum, the Beavers will have new starters. Steve Holsberry will line up at the other corner and Terry Harris looks to be the starter at safety. Both are juniors.

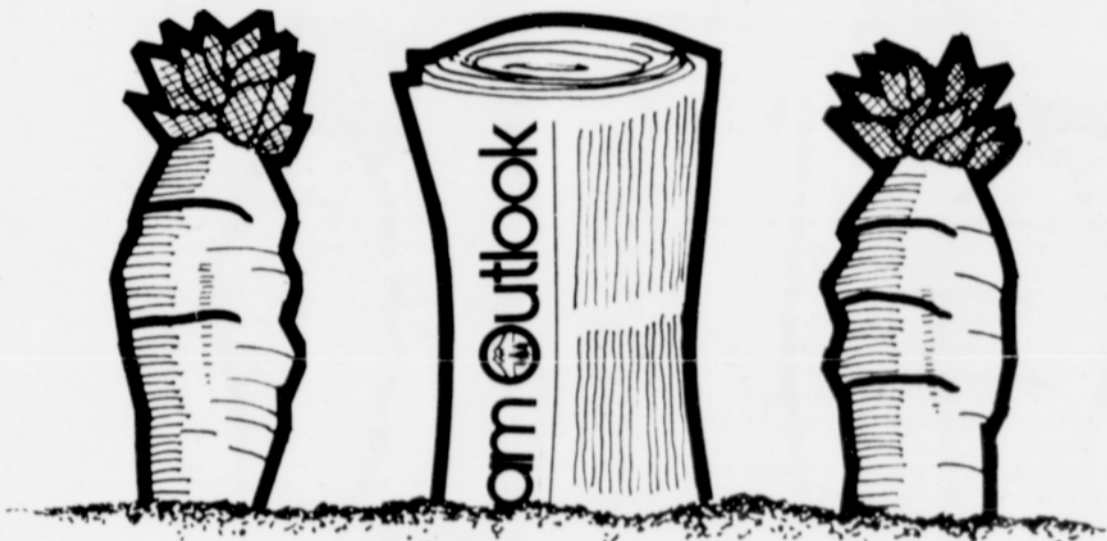
Strong points aren't a strong point with the Beaver defense, but the linebacking corps of senior James Gracio (5-10½, 221) and juniors Jerome Boyd (6-2, 220), Derek Warren (6-1, 223) and Craig Sowash (6-2½, 200) is capable. Sowash will also be the Beavers' monster.

It's probably sheer fantasy to expect the Beavers to win more than two or three games this season, but Avezzano is thinking in the long term. "We don't want to develop a good team and then see it slide back down again," he says. "You can't have a solid program unless you have a solid foundation. I know that's what I want to develop here. That's a situation that can work at Oregon State, but the program must be restructured first."

Which means the Beavers are still aiming for respectability.

JIM HAYS


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